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FM AMEMBASSY BAKU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0926
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES PRIORITY
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 3298
RHMFISS/CDR USEUCOM VAHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 1290
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAKU 000217

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/CARC, DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/18/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [AJ](#)
SUBJECT: AZERBAIJAN: REFERENDUM SITREP #3

REF: A. BAKU 212
[1](#)B. BAKU 216

Classified By: Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Robert Garverick, for reasons 1.4 b and d

[1](#)1. (U) Polls in Azerbaijan's referendum closed on time at 1900 local time and the counting process began immediately thereafter. No results are available yet, as counting and tabulation is likely to take many hours.

CLOSING PROCEDURES

[1](#)2. (C) In the nine precincts observed by Embassy teams, the counting process was confused at best. Despite polling stations have guidebooks produced by IFES available with step by step procedures on how to count, polling station workers often did steps out of order, or skipped them entirely. Observers reported that election officials seemed to know what number they needed at each step, and then simply announced that this was the total they had reached. In two instances observers witnessed that election officials announced numbers that were off by seven votes, but this did not seem to bother the officials. In another instance, observers noted that the number of ballot in the boxes seemed to be at least 100 short of the number the officials announced they should have. Observers also noted that when ballots were taken out of the box, there were sometimes several ballots stuck together, a clear sign of ballot stuffing. In one polling station the officials asked the observers to please leave, so they could just write down numbers and get home to their children.

VOTER TURNOUT

[1](#)3. (C) As of 17:00 local time the Central Election Commission reported voter turnout at 64.12 percent of registered voters. Embassy observer teams in multiple locations, however, dispute the official figures for number of voters. Embassy observers all day reported seeing very few people voting, and could not reconcile what they were seeing with the numbers given to them by polling station workers. Often observers felt it would not have been physically possible for as many people to vote per hour as the official figures said, given the time and space constraints of the polling stations. In several places observers reported seeing voter sign-in sheets that seemed to have the same signature over and over again, or had signatures without the required national ID number next to

them. In several instances, observers talked with opposition party and independent NGO domestic observers who had been at one polling station all day and had radically different figures for the number of voters. In one more rural district, observers felt that the high turnout figures were accurate because local leaders were bringing groups of people to the polling stations.

VOTER UNDERSTANDING OF AMENDMENTS

¶4. (C) Embassy observer teams reported in all locations and at all times that voters seemed to take very little time in completing their ballots. Given that the ballots had 29 line items on them, observers felt that most of the time voters were simply checking "yes" to each item without reading what they said. These "yes" votes seemed to be largely out of ignorance/apathy on the part of the voter, although in several cases observers saw polling station workers or other unidentified people telling voters to put "yes" for everything. Observers anecdotally heard from some voters that they felt they had "no choice" but to vote "yes" for everything.

¶5. (C) All Embassy observer teams included Emboffs who had previously observed the October 2008 presidential election. It appears to observer teams that adherence to election regulations was worse during this referendum than during the presidential election. These types of violations were also seen by Norwegian and British observers. Tomorrow at 11:00 local time there will be a press conference by the small

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Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe delegation, which is expected not/not to be critical of the referendum, as the members reportedly spent little time visiting polling stations. Local independent NGO Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Center will hold a press conference at 12:30. There is no OSCE/ODIHR observation mission for this referendum.
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